DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 857 FL 024 532

AUTHOR MacDonald, Errol
TITLE Global Awareness through Video News.
PUB DATE 25 Feb 96
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Spring Conference of the Tokyo/West Tokyo Japan Association of Language Teachers (Tokyo, Japan, February 1996).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Broadcast Television; Cultural Awareness; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Global Approach; *Instructional Materials; International Relations; Media Selection; *News Reporting; Second Language Instruction; Videotape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS *Authentic Materials; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; Japan; *News in Review; Tokai University (Japan)

ABSTRACT

At Tokai University (Japan), an English-as-a-Second-Language course in global issues through video uses the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's monthly video magazine "News in Review", published eight months a year for use in Canadian English-medium schools. Of the four segments in each magazine, usually two are about Canada or international issues as they relate to Canada; the remainder are on a variety of international topics, all documentary in approach, educational, and presented in a way that demonstrates the power of television in shaping social conscience and global consciousness, an element needed in Japanese society. A supplementary resource package for teachers helps use the video materials. The teacher's intention is to have students comprehend not only the language and content of the segments, but also the issues, concepts, and values within them, and to express feelings and opinions and ask questions based on that understanding. Classroom activities are designed to exploit information, reasoning, and opinion gaps experienced by the students. In using video, teachers are advised to use short sequences, provide repeated viewings, treat the video as both visual and aural text, and plan pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing activities. Contains six references. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Global Awareness Through Video News

ED 407 857

Presentation to
Tokyo/West Tokyo JALT
Spring Conference
February 25, 1996
Tokyo
Japan

Errol MacDonald
Tokai University
Foreign Language Center
1117 Kitakaname, Hiratsuka
Kanagawa 259-12
Japan

1. Global Awareness in the EFL Curriculum

English foreign language curricula in Japanese universities are moving toward the content/theme based instruction common in the English Language Teaching departments of North American universities. However, the impetus for this development in Japan is somewhat different from that in North America where it is usually the product of curriculum designs for programmes in English for Academic Purposes. In the EAP environment, foreign students and residents who are not native speakers of English (e.g. francophone Canadians) must learn the comprehension and production skills necessary to understand and respond to the courses they will later attend in the mainstream degree programmes that are the ultimate goal of their ESL studies.

At Tokai University, where I teach, the rationale for a content/theme based EFL curriculum (still in the design stage) is instead an attempt to lend greater coherence and cohesion to an EFL curriculum that sees native-speaker professors dealing with oral and writing skills, and Japanese nationals responsible for reading, grammar and vocabulary-development courses. The new curriculum will preserve this division of labour but will have all EFL courses at a given grade-level and at a given time within the semester dealing with the same theme, topic or content. This integrated curriculum is to be piloted with students of the Department of International Studies and will require freshmen to take four courses per semester, one for each skill area, for a total of eight theme-based courses over the year. It is projected that the integrated curriculum will advance through second to fourth years with the Class of '96, but at this stage it is not decided how many required credits will be allotted to English.

Not only will such a curriculum have great face validity in terms of its coherence and cohesion, but it also offers high potential for relevance to the interests and learning needs of the students both in terms of the topics themselves and in terms of the sources in the mass media from which the material will be drawn. There is therefore considerable potential for such a programme to attract good numbers of students on even an elective basis.

Topics that immediately come to mind when content-based EFL instruction is planned are: the environment, peace, development, human rights, inter-cultural awareness. Since such topics are relevant to any society and since their study will inevitably be a comparative exercise, they can be subsumed under one term of convenience: global awareness.

2. The Current Teaching Context

While this integrated, theme-based curriculum supposes the co-ordination of course offerings across the skill areas and down through the topics agenda, EFL courses currently taught by native speakers are

FL024537

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Errol MacDonald

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE2

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

subject only to a broad categorization by skill area and grade level. In practice, native-speaking faculty have informally carved out distinct domains for courses above the freshman level: some are working on e-mail and Internet courses, drama, public speaking, writing and media-related courses.

These courses carry on for the full academic year, meeting once per week for 90 minutes. These electives represent at most 36 classroom hours over the academic year. Those students who are particularly interested in studying English often take several unrelated EFL courses concurrently. At best, students at third and fourth year level may take an intensive course meeting three times per week, or a semi-intensive which meets twice per week. Because entrance criteria and selection procedures are not strictly controlled, students in a given class can vary greatly in their English proficiency and department of origin. This situation is far from ideal but is, I believe, the norm at most Japanese universities. It is not yet clear how the new curriculum will affect or be affected by these factors.

3. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation & CBC Educational Services

When I set out to offer a course in global issues through video, I considered the materials available and decided to base the course on a monthly video magazine published by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, called *News in Review*. This was neither the cheapest nor the most convenient choice but had some special characteristics that won me over. I will describe these video materials in later sections, but first I would like to make a quick sketch of the CBC.

The CBC is Canada's nationally-owned TV and radio network, an independent entity (termed a 'Crown Corporation') financed partly by a budget granted by an annual act of Parliament and partly by advertising revenue. It was originally modelled on and remains the Canadian equivalent of the BBC, with the notable difference of a French-language section known as Radio-Canada. The government of the day has no influence on programming content, though it has set goals and limits in terms of the amount of foreign programming, particularly American programming, that may be carried by the CBC. CBC television produces an ever-expanding range of programmes: dramas, serials, children's shows, but is best known for its public affairs broadcasting, its documentaries, and its news broadcasts. Three years ago, in response to CNN and perhaps again in emulation of the BBC, a twenty-four-hour news and information channel called *Newsworld* was established.

Because Canada is a nation of immigrants with ethnic groups from every continent, global awareness is built into the Canadian demographic. This fact is reflected in Canadian TV news services: the CBC maintains a broader network of correspondents than might seem needed by a country of only 27 million inhabitants. It could also be true that the especially active participation of Canada in UN peacekeeping missions since the beginning has made broad international news coverage from the Canadian perspective a necessity for Canadian audiences. Thus the CBC Educational Services have considerable depth and professional competence to draw upon in preparing the eight monthly issues of *News in Review* published for the school year. The Service commissions the news editors of the CBC to produce mini-documentaries on Canadian and world events of the previous months and these appear as a video news magazine usually containing four items per issue. Using the archival resources of the network and wire services, the writers and teaching consultants of the Service prepare a monthly booklet of teacher's resource materials to accompany and enrich the video magazine. The product of all this, *News in Review*, is intended for use in Canadian English-medium schools.

4. Topic Structure in *News in Review*

Of the four segments per issue, usually two are Canadian topics. But these may sometimes be of interest to overseas students. An example from last year's season may illustrate the point. The segment deals with the disbandment of an elite parachute division of the Canadian armed forces after one of its members was found guilty in court martial of beating to death a Somali man who had stolen into the Canadian peacekeeping camp in Mogadishu. The unit was disbanded because its commando mentality had led to discipline problems and, ultimately, to the first known case of an atrocity committed by a Canadian soldier. The public-affairs issues here are relevant to Japan as it begins very hesitantly to participate in such UN missions: the stresses of peacekeeping operations and the resulting potential for the abuse of power,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the proper orientation, function and training of the military. To be considered from the media-studies point of view: how media coverage contributes to a society's ability to criticise itself and take action against injustice.

On the international front, *News in Review* has recently done segments such as The UN at Fifty, The UN Women's Conference in China, A Progress Report on Global Warming, The Million Man March. This global perspective and the fact that the source of the information is in Canada encourage a genuine international awareness in students whose official culture has made a catchphrase of the word "internationalism" yet whose television media are habitually fixated on Japanese-American relations and the strategic manipulations of national party politics. That the CBC, the structural equivalent of NHK in Japan, is so manifestly serious, critical and independent demonstrates some of the essential characteristics of a mature democracy, a society that does not aspire to be a single-cell organism resting on an iron-clad consensus.

The topics of *News in Review* are inherently educative and they are presented in such a way as to demonstrate the power of television in shaping a social conscience and a global consciousness. This globalising effect is sorely needed in Japan. I was recently surprised to find some of my students admitting that they did not know that Bangkok is in Thailand. Other, older and more mature, students responded on a questionnaire that, yes, the US has too much influence on the UN. And yet, bringing coals to Newcastle, when asked in a preceding question, "If you could move the headquarters of the UN to any city, where would you put it?" many of them were caught out having answered San Fransisco or even Washington, as if the UN were inevitably and unalterably an organ of the United States.

The general educational goals of such a global-issues course are to help the students feel part of the world as a whole; to engage them in topics worthy of their age and the times, and to present to them the great questions of the day; to awaken a sense of Japan's responsibilities in the world; to simply inform them; to create something of a generation gap; in addition to develop discussion and seminar skills and the will to explore their opinions even if they are as yet confused and ill-informed.

5. The Documentary vs. The News and Professional Help vs. Going it Alone

To achieve the goals mentioned above it might seem enough to just get students watching the news as we know it in the West, and as is available over broadcast satellite sources. But such a series as *News in Review* offers better chances for the success of a news-based course than anything an EFL department might be able to produce locally from satellite. As with the *ABC News ESL Video Library* (e.g. *CultureWatch*), the segments of *News in Review* are not simply broadcast news items but short documentaries based on news sources. Because raw news bulletins deal with specific circumstances and events now, they do not offer as much potential for classroom use as does a documentary that deals not with today's bombing or last night's landslide but with the politics and history behind the bomb, the deforestation and agricultural abuse that preceded the slide. This is the educative force of the documentary: to telescope time so that the meaning of events in their entire context becomes visible.

So far I've been pressing the superiority of professionally-prepared video materials just in terms of the superiority of the documentary over the news bulletin. The teacher who is determined to go ahead with material taken from broadcast or satellite television, ignoring the copyright issues involved in this, should not understimate the importance of the support materials provided by the publishers. The determined teacher will have to build up a lesson plan from transcripts. This takes several viewings and can be time consuming, though the mind can be working in the background on higher levels of exploitation of the still unprocessed material. Indeed, this rendering to transcript is just what I must do when preparing to use a clip from the video magazine. But I also have the resource package from the CBC Educational Services writers and this brings out a creative interplay between the materials produced by the CBC writers and the activities that freshly occur in the mind of the teacher on site.

The material supplied by the CBC writers is of varying types:

- chronologies detailing the history of an institution, a social problem, a public figure
- charts and graphs illustrating statistics relevant to a topic
- thumbnail sketches of the conflicting points of view of the parties to a conflict
- eyewitness diary accounts that particularise an event treated in general terms in the video
- introductory essays that restate and supplement information given in the video segment

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- statements of the ethical questions, the legal precedents involved in a social issue
- quoted comments by public figures involved in or observing a story
- reproductions of pertinent historical documents (e.g. the Charter of the UN)
- thinking-skills tips and techniques
- discussion, research and essay questions
- project suggestions (e.g. planning an ad campaign for the Quebec referendum)
- addresses of organizations and agencies who may be contacted for further information
- relevant Internet addresses and Websites
- brainstorming, ranking and role-play activities

It was this richness in the support materials that attracted me to *News in Review*. And I believe it is the direction in which video-based ESL/EFL programmes should move. I only caution any potential users that comprehension of the video clip is the absolute pre-requisite to the effective exploitation of these excellent supplementary materials and that making up the comprehension activities can be hard work.

6. Comprehension as Such

Nunan summarizes comprehension as a language skill, particularly as analysed by Richards (1987a), as consisting of "bottom-up" or sentence-level skills and "top-down" or discourse-level skills. I will list below a key group of each type of skill.

Among the sentence-level microskills are the ability to:

- recognise word boundaries
- discriminate among the distinctive sounds of the target language
- recognise typical word-order patterns
- recognise grammatical word classes
- detect sentence constituents (i.e. phrase structure)

Among the discourse-level skills, expressed especially as in relation to content-based listening comprehension, are the ability to:

- identify the topic of the lecture and follow its development
- infer relations (cause, effect, necessary and sufficient conditions)
- identify relationships among units within discourse (major idea, generalisations, hypotheses, examples)
- deduce meanings of words from context

At the end of the section Nunan attempts a further synthesis of all these things and makes a list of more generally-phrased factors with this most global and untechnical one at the top of an ascending scale:

- extracting gist/essential information from longer aural texts without necessarily understanding every word (Nunan: 1989).

This is what I want my students to do, and I always expect my students to be most interested in the issues, concepts, values, *the content* of the materials I bring them. I want them to watch what I present and have the following reaction:

"This video is saying something about global warming, sea-level rise, lowlying islands and the pressures of development. I understand that much. My response is:

- X feelings
- X opinions
- X questions
- X intentions!"

I want them to take up the opportunities I provide them for expressing these to me and to their classmates. This is the product of my bias as a teacher of oral expression but perhaps also of my enthusiasm for the educative value of the material itself. It is easy for me to forget where I am.

It is characteristic of my students that they do not normally address one another or respond directly to others' comments even in seminar or small-class discussion situations. All utterances are addressed to the teacher. Thus the Four Xs are not so easily verbalized as I believe they might be in more individualistic cultures where the notion of respect for the teacher and for received wisdom is less binding. This feature of Japanese students makes structured speaking activities necessary. I take comprehension as a means to an end, which is oral expression. But in fact, comprehension may be an end in itself for my students since

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

perhaps it presents challenge enough as it is. The students thus have a legitimate claim on my attention to the sentence-level skills outlined above.

7. Learning as Such

> In any pre-designed task, its content will be potentially communicative (concerned with meaning and messages) and potentially meta-communicative (providing data and information about the code and its use). Unfortunately the task designer cannot predict that those aspects of content intended as distinctively 'message-focused' or distinctively 'code-focused' will be similarly interpreted or acted upon as such by a learner. Learners will redefine content in their own terms and in relation to the learning purposes which they superimpose upon content. They will also locate any content in relation to the current state of their own knowledge, skills and abilities - potential content will be translated by the learner into what is familiar and what is problematic.
>
> (Breen 1989: 198)

Breen is using the term 'problematic' in a sense apparently pertaining to the learner's hypotheses about the Target Language, and thus the term seems to be mainly code-related. But further remarks, when discussing selecting materials that follow students' interests, shade into an area that is distinctly meaning-related:

> The *problematicity* of content as defined by the learner will be the real catalyst for actual learning work. It is the learner's view of what is both problematic and worth solving in task content which renders particular aspects of the content as genuine means for learning.
>
> (1989: 199)

8. Worth Solving in Task Content

To clarify the concepts of problematicity, content and task, Nunan (1988: 43-44) cites Prabhu's description of the Bangalore Project, a task-based EFL program carried out in the public schools of that city in southern India and now well known in the literature of the EFL profession. Three types of task were described as used in the project:

1. *Information-gap activity*, which involves a transfer of given information from one person to another, or from one form to another, and requiring the decoding or encoding of information from or into language.

2. *Reasoning-gap activity*, which involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns.

3. *Opinion-gap activity*, which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation.

All of these three types of activities have a role to play in the materials to be demonstrated in this presentation. The most familiar to English language teachers is surely the information gap which is the very heart of the concept of pairwork. The video materials that I use are accompanied by background research material in the teacher's resource booklet that can usually be adapted to create information-gap or re-tell activities.

This material is sometimes directly related to certain segments of the video documentary, and this can be used as a preparation for comprehension of the video. Other material may address the subject of the video in the broader sense and thus can be used in the pre-viewing or post-viewing phases.

When students are presented with these kinds of pairwork tasks they do not see large units of text that they must pick their way through. As much as possible, it is not a reading course. My methods of re-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

organizing the supplementary material are best described by example.

Suppose a text detailing the main sections of the UN. I look for common descriptors: number of members, headquarters, term of membership, etc. These descriptors become column headings and allow the students to question their partner in the pairwork and transcribe the information in an orderly and transparent way. The information, and to some extent the Target Language, has been schematised and the students work confidently within the guidelines of the schematic, with little confusion and with an easy path back if it becomes necessary to retrace any steps to re-confirm or alter the information.

In my experience, such activities give the students enormous satisfaction and I see them completely absorbed in co-operating with their partners to solve the puzzle. In whichever phase of exploitation of the video clip this kind of activity is used, the benefit to the student will far outweigh the effort of the teacher in setting up the pairwork. This special characteristic of the ***News in Review*** materials providing such rich supplementary information for the teacher to adapt is what makes the series so much a challenge for me as well as for my students. Appropriate adaptation of the material requires a compromise between sentence-level comprehension activities focused on the the code, and discourse-level activities focused on the content, or message. Combined with this, my materials aim at a balance between comprehension and production.

9. Activity Types, Timing & Sequencing

Susan Stempleski, series editor of the ***ABC News ESL Video Library***, writing in *The Language Teacher* (1994), offers some guidelines and suggestions for anyone using video material in the ELT classroom. Following is a paraphrase of those, with examples and clarifications:

Use short sequences.
Better to concentrate on a segment as short even as three minutes than overtax the attention span in using an item in its entire length.

Provide repeated viewings.
Create different activities for each viewing, and present them before the viewing, in order to focus the attenion of the students on the particular viewing task and/or the the different aspects of the sequence you are concentrating on.

Treat the video as both a visual and audio text.
Viewing the sequence with the sound off can give students the opportunity to produce a certain amount of language based on the pictures alone. Vocabulary-prediction activities are of course suggested by this. The visual material will give ample clues to the topic, locality, protagonists, the events, even dialogue itself may be partially predictable by viewing the visual material alone.

Plan activities for three stages.
Pre-viewing activities: explore the existing knowledge or attitudes of the students by having them survey their classmates in a questionnaire; pre-teach needed vocabulary by making up pairwork activities based on information relevant to the topic; tell the students the basic facts of the situation they are about to see and have them write down a number of things they expect to see and/or hear; since my students are watching documentaries rather than dramatic sequences, I might tell them in a sentence about the issue at stake and have them predict possible short, medium or long term consequences; such an activity can and should be recycled after a viewing.
Viewing activities: during silent viewings point out the scene changes or topic shifts in order to perceive the shape of the whole piece; for sentence-level comprehension, create cloze activities based on the transcript of key scenes; have the students concentrate in turn on factual information, relationships between protagonists, development toward a crisis, the positive forces or characters in the situation, the negative ones, the right wing, the left wing, the factors of the situation that are foreign to their own culture, and those similar to it, all over several viewings. Nominate student pairs or groups to be responsible for one each of these separate aspects through a given viewing. Break the video down somehow into its component elements.
Post-viewing activities: these require the students both to react to the video and to practise the newly-acquired language through discussion, role-play, debate, alternative-outcome and extended-time-frame scenarios (e.g. one year later) or other types of spin-offs.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In this connection, Amtzis (1995) offers an excellent set of suggestions in the example of his students in Katmandu responding to a news report of flooding in Bangkok as might those involved. Thus, a simulated neighbourhood meeting to discuss the situation, what has happened, what is at stake for the people involved, what can be done. He proposes the teacher then introduce new information or a change in circumstance that will cause the students to re-form their positions. His suggestions also encompass written tasks such as progress reports, position papers, letters, simulated newspaper reports. His short article is a brilliant example of how an environmental theme at the international level can be brought home and exploited across the skills.

References

Amtzis, W. (1995). Perspective and circumstance: Using the news. *TESOL Journal* 4 (3), p 31.

Breen, M. (1989). "The evaluation cycle for language learning tasks." In Johnson, R.K. (ed.) *The Second Language Curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1988). *Syllabus Design*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stempleski, S. (1994). Video in the ELT classroom: The role of the teacher. *The Language Teacher 18* (8), p 27-29, 47.

Tomalin, T. (1995). *CultureWatch*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.

The Materials

News in Review

distributed by:
CBC Educational Sales
Box 500, Station A
Toronto, Ontario
M5W 1E6
Canada
fax: 1-416-205-3482
Internet address: edsales@toronto.cbc.ca

BEST COPY AVAILABLE